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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20 RSC-01 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 DRC-01 EB-11 /081 W
---------- 115073
P 022030Z JUL 74
FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7399

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 1132

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT BB
SUBJ: BARBADOS CABINET CHANGE

REF: BRIDGETOWN A-56

1. IN LONG ANTICIPATED MOVE, GOB ANNOUNCED JUNE 28, THAT CAPT. GEORGE FERGUSSON WOULD RELINQUISH HIS RESPONSIBILITIES AS MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS AS OF JULY 1. CONTRARY TO EARLIER SPECULATION, HOWEVER, FERGUSSON WILL RETAIN SEAT IN HOUSE AND WILL REMAIN IN CABINET AS MINISTER W/O PORTFOLIO IN PM'S OFFICE RESPONSIBLE FOR PORT MANAGEMENT AND SHIPPING, WHICH PREVIOUSLY FORMED PART OF HOME AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO.

2. MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS HAS BEEN ABOLISHED AND ITS FUNCTIONS REDISTRIBUTED AMONG PM'S OFFICE AND THREE OTHER MINISTRIES. LION'S SHARE HAS BEEN TRANSFERRED TO MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS HEADED BY ATTORNEY GENERAL (SEN.) GEORGE MOE, WHO IS ALSO FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER.

3. COMMENT: IT HAD BEEN RUMORED FOR SOME TIME THAT FERGUSSON WOULD BE LEAVING THE CABINET TO ASSUME DIRECT MANAGEMENT OF THE PORT AND ASSUMED THAT HIS NEW DUTIES AS PORT MANAGER WOULD REQUIRE HIS RESIGNATION FROM PARLIAMENT TO AVOID CONFLICT OF INTEREST. SOLUTION REACHED BY PM BARROW AND DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY (DLP) ELIMINATES NECESSITY OF CALLING BY-ELECTION AT TIME WHEN BARBADIAN PUBLIC GROWING INCREASINGLY ANXIOUS OVER RAPIDLY RISING COST OF LIVING. WHILE POSSIBLE LOSS IN BY-ELECTION WOULD NOT
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HAVE DIMINISHED SIGNIFICANTLY DLP'S STRENGTH IN PARLIAMENT,

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WHERE PARTY OCCUPIES 18 OF 24 SEATS, ELECTION CAMPAIGN WOULD NO DOUBT HAVE BECOME FOCUS FOR CONCERTED AND POSSIBLY EMBARRASSING ATTACKS BY OPPOSITION BARBADOS LABOR PARTY (BLP) AND CONSUMER PRESSURE GROUPS ON GOB'S HANDLING OF ECONOMY, WHICH GOB NO DOUBT WISHED TO AVOID. MOREOVER, WITH NATIONAL ELECTIONS ONLY TWO YEARS AWAY, DLP LOSS AT POLLS WOULD HAVE DAMAGED PARTY'S PRESTIGE AND LENT STRONG ENCOURAGEMENT TO BLP, WHICH ALREADY APPEARS TO BE GAINING MOMENTUM AS RESULT OF OPPOSITION LEADER TOM ADAMS'S WELL-RECEIVED REPLY TO PM BARROW'S BUDGET SPEECH IN APRIL AND THE BLP'S CURRENT SERIES OF POLITICAL MEETINGS.
TRANSFER OF MOST IMPORTANT HOME AFFAIRS FUNCTIONS TO MINISTRY OF LEGAL AFFAIRS IS ALSO SIGNIFICANT IN THAT IT APPEARS TO ENHANCE EVEN FURTHER THE POWER AND PRESTIGE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL GEORGE MOE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, REORGANIZATIONS, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS, MINISTERS (DIPLOMATS), ELECTIONS, LOWER HOUSE, PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: shawdg
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BRIDGE01132
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740175-1017
From: BRIDGETOWN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740782/aaaacscq.tel
Line Count: 76
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BRIDGETOWN A-56
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 SEP 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 SEP 2002 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <14 FEB 2003 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
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30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BARBADOS CABINET CHANGE
TAGS: PINT, BB, (FERGUSSON, GEORGE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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